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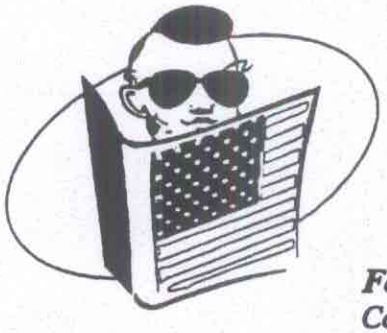

THE BEST OF
YOUNG AMERICAN
NOVELISTS

For Immediate Release
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National Judges
Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
Robert Stone
Anne Tyler
Tobias Wolff
Ian Jack, Editor

Regional Judges
Richard Bausch
Charles Baxter
Rosellen Brown
Frederick Busch
Stuart Dybek
Maureen Howard
Thom Jones
Beverly Lowry
Leonard Michaels
Howard Frank Mosher
Jayne Anne Phillips
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GRANTA/Best of Young American Novelists

Regional Winners Announced

Who are the best young novelists in the United States of America?

Granta magazine asked fifteen distinguished American writers for their opinion. They were enrolled as judges—three for each of five American regions—in the first stage of a two-part judging process and have spent the past five months reading hundreds of novels by authors under the age of forty from all over the country. Submissions came from large publishers, small publishers and university presses; librarians and booksellers were also invited to nominate their favorite novels.

The result is a shortlist of fifty-two young American novelists whose work, the judges believe, demonstrates outstanding talent and promise.

The next stage is to choose from the shortlist the final twenty writers who next year will be named the Best of Young American Novelists.

The work of the fifty-two writers listed below will be submitted to the national judging panel: Robert Stone, Anne Tyler, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Tobias Wolff, and *Granta*'s editor, Ian Jack. The national judges will arrive at a final list of twenty winners, to be announced in June 1996, when a special issue of *Granta* will be published devoted to their work.

Best of Young American Novelists was inspired by the two Best of Young British Novelists campaigns which *Granta* ran in the UK in 1983 and 1993. In 1983, Kazuo Ishiguro, Martin Amis, Ian McEwan, Julian Barnes, and Rose Tremain were among the winners; in 1993, the list included Jeanette Winterson, Will Self, Alan Hollinghurst, and Caryl Phillips (a complete list is attached). Both campaigns generated controversy and a lively debate in the media.

Granta magazine has long been known for its commitment to good writing—fiction, reportage, travel writing and memoir. It has helped to establish the reputation of writers such as Bruce Chatwin, Salman Rushdie, Richard Ford, and Martin Amis. With the Best of Young American Novelists campaign, the magazine aims to discover who is writing the best new fiction in the United States today.

Granta is planning readings and other literary events nationwide for both the regional and national winners—a celebration of literary fiction in the United States today.

To be eligible, writers had to be US citizens under the age of forty and to have published at least one novel or book of short stories by May 31, 1995.

A list of the judges, the fifty-two regional winners, their books, publishers and biographies follows:

Mid-Atlantic

Judges: **Frederick Busch, Maureen Howard, Stephen Wright**

Madison Smartt Bell, *The Year of Silence,* Penguin
David Bowman, *Let the Dog Drive,* Penguin
Edwidge Danticat, *Breath, Eyes, Memory,* Soho Press/Vintage
Michael Drinkard, *Disobedience,* Norton
Jeffrey Eugenides, *The Virgin Suicides,* Farrar, Straus & Giroux
Jonathan Franzen, *The Twenty Seventh City,* Farrar, Straus & Giroux
Indira Ganesan, *The Journey,* Knopf
Randall Kenan, *Let the Dead Bury the Dead,* Harcourt Brace
Binnie Kirshenbaum, *Disturbance in One Place,* Fromm International
Allen Kurzweil, *A Case of Curiosities,* Harcourt Brace
Jim Lewis, *Sister,* Graywolf
Fae Myenne Ng, *Bone,* Hyperion
Robert O'Connor, *Buffalo Soldiers,* Knopf
Agnes Rossi, *The Quick,* Norton
Paul Russell, *Sea of Tranquility,* Dutton
Joanna Scott, *Various Antidotes,* Henry Holt
Katharine Weber, *Objects In Mirror Are Closer Than They Appear,* Crown
Jacqueline Woodson, *Autobiography of a Family Photo,* Dutton

New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Washington D.C.

Midwest

Judges: **Charles Baxter, Stuart Dybek, Thom Jones**

Brian Kitely, *Still Life With Insects,* Graywolf
David Haynes, *Somebody Else's Mama,* Milkweed
Lorrie Moore, *Who Will Run the Frog Hospital?,* Knopf
Chris Offut, *Kentucky Straight,* Vintage
Daniel Lyons, *The Last Good Man,* University of Massachusetts Press
J.S. Marcus, *The Art of Cartography,* Knopf

Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Oklahoma, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota

New England

Judges: **Rosellen Brown, Howard Frank Mosher, Jayne Anne Phillips**

Gish Jen, *Typical American,* Knopf
Tom Drury, *The End of Vandalism*, Houghton Mifflin
Elizabeth McCracken, *Here's Your Hat, What's Your Hurry,* Random House
Stewart O'Nan, *Snow Angels,* Doubleday
Connie Porter, *All Bright Court,* Houghton Mifflin
Patricia Powell, *Me Dying Trial*, Heinemann
Melanie Sumner, *Polite Society*, Houghton Mifflin
Melanie Rae Thon, *Iona Moon*, Simon & Schuster
Kate Wheeler, *Not Where I Started From,* Houghton Mifflin

Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island

South

Judges: **Richard Bausch, Beverly Lowry, Padgett Powell**

John Gregory Brown, *Decorations in a Ruined Cemetery,* Houghton Mifflin
Tony Early, *Here We Are in Paradise*, Little, Brown
Louis Edwards, *Ten Seconds,* Graywolf
Kaye Gibbons, *Charms for the Easy Life,* Putnam Berkley Group
Jill McCorkle, *Ferris Beach*, Algonquin
Ann Patchett, *Taft,* Houghton Mifflin

West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Virginia

West

Judges: **Leonard Michaels, Marilynne Robinson, James Welch**

Sherman Alexie, *Reservation Blues*, Grove/Atlantic
Rick Bass, *Platte River*, Houghton Mifflin
Ethan Canin, *The Palace Thief*, Random House
Cristina Garcia, *Dreaming in Cuban*, Knopf
David Guterson, *Snow Falling on Cedars*, Harcourt Brace/Vintage
Chang-rae Lee, *Native Speaker*, Putnam Berkeley
Renée Manfredi, *Where Love Leaves Us*, University of Iowa Press
Antonya Nelson, *Family Terrorists*, Houghton Mifflin
Ann Packer, *Mendocino*, Chronicle Books
Charlotte Watson Sherman, *One Dark Body*, HarperCollins
Mona Simpson, *Anywhere But Here*, Knopf/Vintage
Steve Yarbrough, *Mississippi History*, University of Missouri Press

Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Alaska, Hawaii

Note: The number of winners differs from region to region, according to the number of submissions received by each region. By this formula, New England was asked to submit seven. The New England regional judges, however, felt unable to limit their selection to this number and asked to be allowed to choose nine. Judges in the other four regions were given an opportunity to add to their original selections, but after reconsideration made no changes. The two additional New England winners expanded the total from the originally intended fifty.

On GRANTA's
Best of Young British Novelists 1993

Salman Rushdie
(1983 Winner, 1993 Judge)

"We were all proud of the list and felt sure that readers would be as delighted as we had been to discover so many vivid, confident and ambitious new writers. The smart book-world chatter about this 'generation' says that it's no good. How pleasant, we thought, to be able to disprove that proposition."

"I agreed to be a judge for *Best of Young British Novelists-2* because I wanted to find out for myself if the good stuff really was there. In my view, it is. The four of us have worked extremely hard, reading, re-reading, evaluating, debating. It was a marvelously un-bitchy experience, and I hope that we will be seen to have performed some service, not only to the chosen writers, but also to readers."

A.S. Byatt
(1993 Judge)

"We all went through the same cycle of intense gloom and disappointment about the general state of young writing, followed by an equally strong sense of pleasure and excitement about the power and variety of the list we were able to come up with."

GRANTA's *Best of Young British Novelists*

1983	1993
Martin Amis	Ian Banks
Pat Barker	Louis de Bernieres
Julian Barnes	Anne Billson
Ursula Bentley	Tibor Fischer
William Boyd	Esther Freud
Buchi Emecheta	Alan Hollinghurst
Maggie Gee	Kazuo Ishiguro
Kazuo Ishiguro	A. L. Kennedy
Alan Judd	Philip Kerr
Adam Mars-Jones	Hanif Kureishi
Ian McEwan	Adam Lively
Shiva Naipul	Adam Mars-Jones
Philip Norman	Candia McWilliam
Christopher Priest	Lawrence Norfolk
Salman Rushdie	Ben Okri
Lisa St. Aubin de Teran	Caryl Philips
Clive Sinclair	Will Self
Graham Swift	Nicholas Shakespeare
Rose Tremain	Helen Simpson
A. N. Wilson	Jeanette Winterson

Brief Biographies of the Regional Winners

Sherman Alexie, a Spokane/Coeur D'Alene Indian, is the author of three novels and several other works of poetry and prose. He is a citation winner for the PEN/Hemingway Award and a winner of a 1994 Lila Wallace-*Reader's Digest* Award. He lives in Seattle, Washington.

Rick Bass lives on a remote ranch in northern Montana. In addition to his fiction writing he has written five books about the outdoors including his latest, *A Search for Survivors in the Wilderness of Colorado*, a nonfiction account of a search for grizzly bears.

Madison Smartt Bell has published eight novels and two collections of short stories. His latest novel, *All Souls Rising*, has just been named a finalist in the 1995 National Book Awards. He teaches at Goucher College and lives in Baltimore.

David Bowman is from a family of California writers. He lives in New York and flies out to Los Angeles once a year to drive through the Mojave desert for four weeks. He has just finished writing his second novel, *Bunny Modern*.

John Gregory Brown is the director of the creative writing program at Sweet Briar College. His second novel, *The Wrecked, Blessed Body of Shelton Lafleur* will be published in the spring of 1996. He lives in Virginia.

Ethan Canin is a graduate of Stanford University, Harvard Medical School, and has an MFA from the University of Iowa. He has written a collection of stories - *Emperor of the Air*, a novel - *Blue River*, and a collection of novellas - *The Palace Thief*. He is the winner of numerous awards.

Edwidge Danticat was born in Haiti in 1969 and came to the United States when she was twelve years old. She graduated from Barnard College and received an MFA from Brown University. *Krik Krak*, her recent story collection, is a finalist for the 1995 National Book Awards.

Michael Drinkard is the author of two novels, *Green Bananas* and *Disobedience*. A native of Redlands, California, he is a graduate of the University of California at Santa Cruz and holds an MFA in creative writing from Columbia University. He lives in Brooklyn with his wife, the novelist Jill Eisenstadt.

Tom Drury was educated at the University of Iowa and Brown University. His work has appeared in *The New Yorker, Harper's, Mississippi Review, South Carolina Review,* and *North American Review. The End of Vandalism* is his first novel. He lives in Connecticut.

Tony Early has lived most of his life in North Carolina. His stories have appeared in *Harper's* and *TriQuarterly,* among other periodicals, and have been widely anthologized. *Here We Are in Paradise* is his first book; presently, he is at work on a novel.

Louis Edwards completed *Ten Seconds* in the summer of 1986, but after two early rejections placed the manuscript in a closet, where it remained for four years, until rescued by a nosy friend who was house-sitting. The book was one of *Publishers Weekly's* Best Books of 1991 and Edwards has received a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Whiting Writers' Award.

Jeffrey Eugenides grew up in Grosse Point, Michigan, and now lives in New York City. The first chapter of *The Virgin Suicides* appeared in *The Paris Review,* and it won the Aga Khan Prize for fiction. He received an Ingram Merrill Foundation Fellowship in 1992.

Jonathan Franzen was born in Illinois and grew up in Missouri. He has worked at Harvard University's Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences and been awarded a Massachusetts Artists Fellowship. He lives in New York City. *The Twenty-Seventh City* is his first novel.

Indira Ganesan was born in Srirangam, India. She was educated at Vassar College and the University of Iowa and now divides her time between New Jersey and the University of Santa Cruz where she teaches creative writing. *The Journey* is her first novel.

Cristina Garcia was born in Havana, Cuba and grew up in New York City. She worked as a correspondent for *Time* magazine in San Francisco, Miami, and Los Angeles, where she currently lives. *Dreaming In Cuban*, her first novel, was a finalist for the 1992 National Book Awards and was chosen by *Publishers Weekly* as one of the best books of the year.

Kaye Gibbons has written five novels; *Sights Unseen* is the most recent. She has won the Sue Kaufman Prize for First Fiction from the Academy of Arts and Letters and a 1990/PEN Revson Award, among many others. She has lived in North Carolina most of her life.

David Guterson is a contributing editor to *Harper's* as well as an author of fiction and nonfiction. He lives on Bainbridge Island, Washington. He has recently been awarded the 1995 PEN/Faulkner Award for *Snow Falling on Cedars.*

David Haynes was born and grew up outside of St. Louis, Missouri. Among other jobs, he has taught middle school for fifteen years. *Somebody Else's Momma* is his first novel; two more books, *Live at Five* and *Heathens,* will be published in 1996.

Gish Jen has received grants from the NEA, the James Michener/Copernicus Society, the Bunting Institute, and the Massachusetts Artists' Foundation. Her work has appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies including *The New Yorker* and *The Best American Short Stories 1988*. *Typical American* is her first novel. She lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Randall Kenan was born in Brooklyn and raised in North Carolina. *Let the Dead Bury the Dead* was a *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize Finalist and was shortlisted for the National Book Critics Circle Award. He teaches writing at Sarah Lawrence College and Columbia University.

Binnie Kirshenbaum lives and works in New York City. She has just completed a book of short stories, *History on a Personal Note*, and is working on a new novel. Her work has been widely published in magazines and anthologies such as *The New England Review* and *Harper's Bazaar*.

Brian Kitely has lived for extended periods of time in Seattle, New York, Cairo, Provincetown, and Denver. He is currently the director of the Writing Program at the University of Denver. A new novel, *I Know Many Songs But I Cannot Sing*, a book written in part on postcards that were mailed to friends, will be published in 1996.

Allen Kurzweil, a graduate of Yale University and a Fulbright Fellow, has lived in Australia, France, and Italy as well as the United States. He has written for numerous magazines both here and abroad. He spent five years researching *A Case of Curiosities*, currently he is in Santa Fe, New Mexico doing research for a new novel.

Chang-rae Lee was born in South Korea and immigrated to the US when he was three. He graduated from Yale University and received an MFA from the University of Oregon where he currently teaches. *Native Speaker* is his first novel.

Jim Lewis has degrees in philosophy from Brown University and Columbia University. He has taught literature and philosophy at Columbia, written essays on contemporary art for numerous magazines and has recently collaborated with director Larry Clark on the movie *Kids*. *Sister* is his first novel.

Daniel Lyons is a freelance journalist and lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan. His stories have appeared in *GQ, Playboy, Redbook, Story*, and various literary magazines. He is the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts literary fellowship.

Renée Manfredi was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Her stories have appeared in, among others, the *Georgia Review*, the *Mississippi Review*, the *Iowa Review*, and the *Pushcart Prize* collection. She is now working on a novel and teaching at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks.

J.S. Marcus is from Milwaukee, and he attended the University of Wisconsin. His stories have appeared in *The New Yorker, GQ, Harper's*, and *Antaeus*. *The Art of Cartography* is his first book.

Jill McCorkle's novels include *The Cheer Leader*, *July 7th*, *Ferris Beach* and *Tending to Virginia*. A new novel will be published in the fall of 1996. She is currently living in Boston and teaching at Harvard University.

Elizabeth McCracken's first book, *Here's Your Hat, What's Your Hurry*, was a 1994 American Library Association Notable Book of the Year. She lives in Massachusetts where until recently she was a full-time librarian. She is at work on a second novel.

Lorrie Moore teaches at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. She is the author of two collections of short stories, *Self-Help* and *Like Life*, and two novels, *Anagrams* and *Who Will Run the Frog Hospital?* She has been the recipient of fellowships from the NEA, the Guggenheim Foundation, and the Ingram Merrill Foundation.

Antonya Nelson is the author of three short story collections and an upcoming novel. She lives in New Mexico with her husband, the writer Robert Boswell, and teaches at New Mexico State University.

Fae Myenne Ng was born in San Francisco and now lives in New York City. Her short stories have appeared in *Harper's* and other magazines, and have been widely anthologized.

Chris Offut grew up in the Appalachian Mountains of eastern Kentucky and spent ten years traveling throughout America and working over fifty jobs. He is the author of two short story collections, *Kentucky Straight* and *The Same River Twice*, and a first novel that will be published in 1997. He lives in rural Iowa.

Robert O'Connor was born in Eastchester, New York. He teaches creative writing at SUNY Oswego. He is at work on another novel, *Life Saving*, about life in suburbia, as well as on a nonfiction book on his experiences teaching English to prison inmates.

Stewart O'Nan was born and raised in Pittsburgh. He has a BS in Aerospace Engineering and an MFA in Fiction. He has written a short story collection, *In the Walled City*, and a novel, *Snow Angels*, both of which received awards. His second novel, *The Names of the Dead*, will be published in March, 1996. He lives in Connecticut.

Ann Packer's stories have appeared in many magazines including *The New Yorker*, *Ploughshares* and *Threepenny Review*, as well as in *Prize Stories 1992:The O. Henry Awards*. She lives in California. *Mendocino* is her first book.

Michael Parker is the author of *Hello Down There*, a 1993 *New York Times* Notable Book, and *The Geographical Cure*, a collection of stories and a novella. He teaches English at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Ann Patchett is the author of *Taft* and *The Patron Saint of Liars,* which was chosen in 1992 by the American Library Association's Notable Books Council as one of the best works of fiction. A graduate of Sarah Lawrence College, Patchett was recently a Bunting Institute fellow at Radcliffe.

Connie Porter was born in Buffalo, New York. She has taught at Milton Academy, Southern Illinois University and Emerson College, and has written six children's books. *All Bright Court* is her first novel. She recently moved to Virginia Beach, where she is at work on a second novel.

Patricia Powell, born and raised in Jamaica, emigrated to the United States in 1982. She went to Wellesley College, and received an MFA from Brown University where she completed her second novel, *A Small Gathering of Bones.* She teaches at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, and is researching her third novel.

Agnes Rossi has published a novel and two collection of stories. *The Quick,* her first novel, was named a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year. She lives in Brooklyn, teaches remedial reading and writing, and is at work on a second novel, *Fancy.*

Paul Russell was born in Memphis, Tennessee and began composing music at an early age. He holds a Ph.D and an MFA from Cornell University and teaches at Vassar College. He has published three novels and is at work on a third.

Joanna Scott was named a MacArthur Fellow at the age of thirty-one. She is the author of three novels, *Fading - My Parmacheene Belle, The Closest Possible Union,* and *Arrogance,* a collection of short stories, *Various Antidotes,* and has won numerous awards. She teaches at the University of Rochester.

Charlotte Watson Sherman lives in Seattle with her family, which includes two cats, a Cocker puppy, one turtle, a host of goldfish and a small tribe of walkingsticks. *One Dark Body* is her first novel and recently she has edited *Sisterfire: A Black Womanist Anthology.*

Mona Simpson is the author of *Anywhere But Here* and *The Lost Father*. She is at work on a third novel, *The Regular Guy*. She is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, a grant from the NEA, a Whiting Award, and the Hodder Fellowship at Princeton University. Her short stories have appeared in *The Best American Short Stories, Pushcart* and many other anthologies.

Melanie Sumner's fiction has appeared in *The New Yorker, Story,* and many other magazines. She grew up in Georgia, spent two years in the Peace Corps in Senegal and is currently learning how to become a "smoke jumper."

Melanie Rae Thon is the author of two novels - *Meteors in August* and *Iona Moon* - and a collection of stories - *Girls in the Grass.* She has taught writing, literature, and history at several universities in the Boston area, most recently at Emerson College and Harvard University.

Katharine Weber has published reviews, essays, and literary profiles in various publications including *The New Yorker, Story, The Boston Globe,* and *Publishers Weekly*. She lives in Bethany, Connecticut where she is at work on her second novel.

Kate Wheeler has traveled extensively in Europe, Asia, and Australia, and was formally ordained as a Buddhist nun in Burma. Her collection of short stories, *Not Where I Started From*, received a Whiting Writers' Award and was a finalist for the PEN/Faulkner Award. She lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts and is at work on a novel.

Jaqueline Woodson has written five young adult novels as well as *Autobiography of a Family Photo,* her first novel. She has received the *Kenyon Review* Award for Literary Excellence in Fiction and an American Film Institute Award. Raised in Brooklyn and South Carolina, she now lives in Brooklyn.

Steve Yarbrough is the author of two collections of stories, *Family Man* and *Mississippi History.* He is the recipient of the 1993 Lawrence Foundation Award for the Short Story and the 1988 Charles Anquff Award for Literary Excellence. He teaches at California State University in Fresno.